

THE MECHANICAL TREATMENT OF HIP JOINT DISEASE.

BY

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The diagnosis of hip joint disease having been made, the question of treatment immediately confronts us. We are called upon not only to relieve our patient from immediate suffering, but to direct our attention to the pathological condition present; to bring about by the application of scientific principles, that process of repair which will result in complete resolution of the diseased tissues to their normal or healthy condition.

Before we can scientifically treat hip joint disease we must first know the cause and course of the disease. The cause we most frequently trace to some traumatism. This sets up a local inflammatory condition. Then follows the invasion of the tubercle bacilli on these now inflamed tissues. There is a steady combat of the bacilli with the army of leucocytes supplied by nature to resist the onset of the invaders, and subsequently the final supremacy of the latter followed by the subjective and objective symptoms present.

Not until we have fully learned all the microscopic as well as the macroscopic changes taking place, can we expect to follow the disease to a successful issue.

Rest for inflammation and disease finds no exception here, and absolute fixation alone invariably gives relief. But when we consider that we have in the hip joint a diseased zone which is so prone to irritation from friction, owing to the proximity of the head of the bone to the acetabulum; then we have also to consider the best means of separating these surfaces and keeping them apart. By so doing we allow the process of repair to go on without constant irritation to the inflamed area which would be caused by the constant rubbing of the ball and socket joint. And thirdly, the joint must be protected from further injury. So that the three essentials are (1) immobilization, (2) extension, (3) protection.

We will now briefly consider the brace, splint or appliance which will best accomplish these ends.

Not infrequently do cases come to us in which, either from maltreatment or neglect, there is a greater or less amount of flexion at the